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The Soviet Brigade in Cuba (S/NF)

Imagery Analysis Report

Top Secret

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Preface	The Soviet military presence in Cuba has be	een an issue of high intelli-	
	gence interest for over 25 years. One aspect of soviet brigade based in Cuba—the only Soviet	this concern centers on the military unit on the island.	
	This brigade has been continually scrutinized by its potential for providing some indication of So	y the Community because of	
	and/or the Caribbean. The introduction of a mo	ore sophisticated military	
	base of operations might be evidenced by briga stallations associated with this unit. (S/WN)	de activities or activity at in-	
	Over the past six years special attention has	hoon given to the meniter	
	ing of brigade activities, and documenting stanc	ling procedures and	
	changes which have been observed. This report brigade's structure, its activities, and its capabili	t provides an analysis of the ties. The report also	
	provides a basis upon which future assessments	can be made and updates a	
	previous NPIC report on the Soviet brigade in C	uba issued in 1980." (S/WN)	
	*NPIC Imagery Analysis Report, Soviet Brigade Training Cycl	e, Cuba (S) (S/WN)	25 X 1
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The Soviet Brigade in Cuba (S/NF)

Overview and Conclusions
Imagery available through
was used in this

report. (S/WN)

Although the Soviet brigade in Cuba constitutes the closest deployment of Soviet Ground Forces units to the continental United States, and the only Soviet Ground Forces in the Western Hemisphere, it poses virtually no off-island threat. Soviet brigade forces could conceivably deploy off-island using Cuban air and seaborne transportation; however, there is no evidence to indicate the Soviet brigade has ever trained in any deployment scenario. No organic airlift or sealift capability exists in the brigade. (S/WN)

The Soviet brigade evolved from one of the Soviet Ground Forces units present in Cuba in 1962. The present-day Soviet brigade in Cuba numbers approximately 2,900 soldiers. (S/WN)

The Soviet brigade is probably in Cuba to serve primarily as a security force for such interests as the Soviet Signal Intelligence (sigint) Complex at Lourdes. The brigade also serves as a sign of Soviet commitment to the Castro regime and symbolizes Soviet combat capability, however limited, in the Western Hemisphere. (S/WN)

A total modernization of facilities is under way at the main Soviet garrison at Santiago de las Vegas 2. Replacement and modernization of existing facilities is the most likely explanation for construction currently under way. If, however, existing facilities are not razed, the current construction will increase vehicle storage capacity by 60 percent. A large increase in vehicle space could support the introduction of additional Soviet units into the brigade, pre-positioning of war reserves, or establishment of a second table of organization and equipment (mobilization base unit). Each of these methods is commonly used for force generation in the Soviet Union. (S/WN)

The amount of bunkered ammunition storage under construction more than triples the ammunition storage area formerly available to the brigade. Such a large ammunition storage capacity is excessive for a unit this size. Upon completion of the 37 bunkers now under construction, 18,600 cubic meters of storage space will be available to the brigade. If standard Soviet ammunition storage practices are followed, with the ammunition stacked 3 meters high, the new bunkers could accommodate an estimated 14,000 metric tons of ammunition. (S/WN)

Since 1980, the brigade has been observed conducting only one military activity: its programatic training cycle. The training cycle for the brigade is tied to the semiannual troop rotation. Soviet troops travel to and from

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Cuba by Soviet passenger ship. Some limited evidence suggests a small portion of the rotation—probably the transport of senior officers with dependents and senior noncommissioned officers—may be accomplished by air. (S/WN)

The brigade is not currently equipped with firstline Soviet military equipment but will probably receive newer generations of Soviet combat vehicles over the next several years. (S/WN)

Barring a Soviet political decision to introduce significant numbers of new personnel or offensive weapons systems into Cuba, the current modernization program within the Soviet brigade is not expected to increase significantly the threat to US interests posed by the brigade. Any actions that might result in a heightened US perception of threat would have to be considered by the Soviets as potentially provocative acts, given long-established US sensitivity to Soviet actions in Cuba. (S/WN)

The Soviet Brigade in Cuba (S/NF)

Discussion

History of the Soviet Brigade

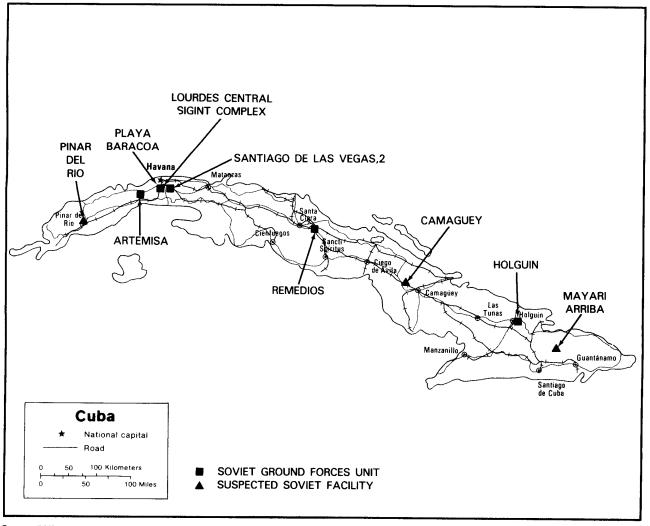
The Soviet Union deployed four armored Ground Forces combat units to Cuba in 1962. These armored units were garrisoned in Artemisa and Santiago de las Vegas 2 (in western Cuba, Remedios in

central Cuba, and Holguin in eastern Cuba. Another five confirmed or suspect Soviet military camps were located in Camaguey, Mayari Arriba, Pinar del Rio, Playa Baracoa, and Lourdes Figure 1). 25X1 Troop strength at these nine camps was estimated at 10,946 in 1962.1 (S/NF)

Similar amounts and types of equipment were observed within each of the four armored units in 1963 (Table 1). All units contained at least one motorized rifle battalion, one tank battalion, one air defense battery, one antitank-guided-missile (ATGM) battery, and

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Figure 1. Soviet Military Facilities in Cuba, 1962



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Table 1. Principal Weapons and Support Equipment of Soviet Ground Forces in Cuba

Weapons/Support	Number Available Per Facility				
Equipment	Santiago de las Vegas 2	Lourdes*	Artemisa†	Holguin†	Remedios†
1963					22
T-54	32		30	31	32
PT-76 tank	3	_	_	3	
SU-100 assault gun	9		9	9	9
ATGM	‡		8	‡	9
FROG	_		2		2
AAA (antiaircraft artillery)	15	_	15	15	14
Field artillery	3	_	4	5	8
Mortars		_	3	7	6
FROG transporter	4		5		8
BRDM	5		2		7
BTR-60			51	-	
TMP (ponton bridge company)	8	_	1	11	10
Cargo truck	43		94	269	202
	11		10	18	26
Utility truck	1 1			16	7
POL truck FIRE CAN radar	1		1	1	2

This table is classified SECRET/WNINTEL.

^{*}Combat equipment was not deployed at Lourdes in significant numbers in 1963.

[†]Reverted to Cuban control in 1963-1964.

[†]Probably housed an ATGM battery.

service/support units. Free rocket over ground (FROG) battalions were identified in two of the facilities. (S/NF)

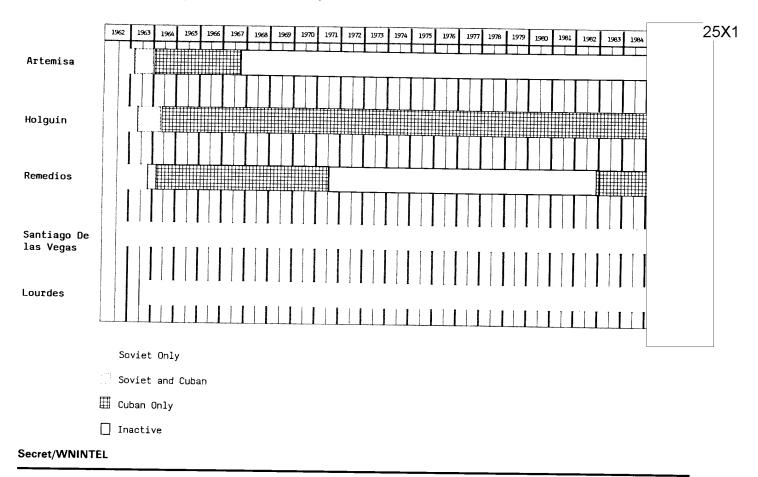
Three of the four armored units (Artemisa, Santiago de las Vegas 2, and Remedios) were apparently deployed in support of Soviet offensive missile bases. Deployment of the fourth unit at Holguin suggests that the Soviets intended to use the large airfield there as a Soviet base, thus necessitating a ground combat force for security purposes. (S/NF)

The Santiago de las Vegas 2 facility has probably functioned as the Soviet combat headquarters since 1962, as suggested by an elite "Guards" insignia drawn on the ground there. Santiago de las Vegas 2 was also

the redeployment site for selected equipment withdrawn from other Soviet facilities after the October 1962 missile crisis.¹ (S/NF)

Three of the known Soviet Ground Forces facilities (Artemisa, Holguin, and Remedios) reverted to Cuban control between the spring of 1963 and the spring of 1964. Analysis of imagery acquired during that period clearly showed Soviet forces preparing for departure from the installations, and Cuban forces arriving to take over the installations from the Soviets. The fourth Ground Forces facility, Santiago de las Vegas 2, has remained under Soviet control since 1962. In addition, the Soviets established a presence at the Lourdes Central Sigint Complex in June 1963. Chart 1 details the year-to-year occupancy of these sites. (S/NF)

Chart 1. Facilities Housing Soviet Combat Forces, 1962-1965



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Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/02/17: CIA-RDP87T00076R000304900001-9 **Top Secret** 25X1 The Lourdes Central Sigint Complex was also un-Installations and Table of Organization and Equipment der development early in the 1960s. 25X1 25X1 The Soviet brigade in Cuba is known to use five facilities either as garrisons or as regular training areas (Figure 3). Most of the Soviet brigade in Cuba is garrisoned at Santiago de las Vegas 2 (Figure 4). Units garrisoned there include one tank battalion, two motorized *Additional information on the Lourdes complex is available in NPIC Basic Imagery Interpretation Reports, Lourdes Central Sigint Complex (S), S/WN) 25X1 25X1

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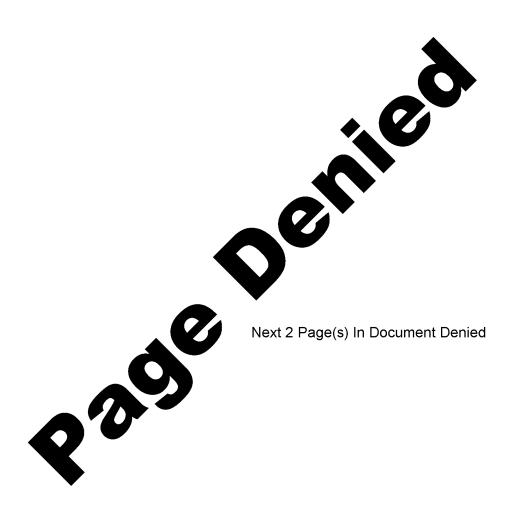
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rifle battalions, one multiple rocket launcher (MRL) battalion, one self-propelled antiaircraft (SPAA) unit, one signal unit, and one materiel support battalion. The remaining brigade assets are garrisoned at the Lourdes sigint complex (Figure 5). One 122-mm howitzer D-30 battalion, one BTR-60PB armored personnel carrier (APC)-equipped motorized rifle battalion, and one truck-mounted scissors bridge (TMM) company are garrisoned at Lourdes. A phased-training unit is	25X 25X
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San Pedro. Tank and APC crew training as well as individual small-arms qualifications are conducted in Alquizar. Mariel has been used in the past for live-firing exercises involving SPAA assets. Additionally, brigade SPAA elements trained on at least two occasions in the San Antonio de los Banos training area. Soviet brigade howitzer assets were observed (in an out-of-cycle event) training in Mariel on one occasion (Figure 9, page 16). (S/WN)

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The Soviet Brigade Structure

The Soviet brigade in Cuba is similar in structure to a Soviet motorized rifle division (Chart 3). Regiment-sized units within the motorized rifle division have been reduced to battalions in the Soviet brigade in Cuba. The brigade is composed of three motorized rifle battalions, one tank battalion, and one artillery battalion—all regiments in a Soviet divisional structure. Additional artillery support in the form of one MRL battalion is also present in the brigade. At least one motorized rifle brigade with a structure similar to the Soviet brigade in Cuba has been formed in the Soviet Union. Brigades by their very nature are individually configured by the Soviet army to serve a specific mission. (S/WN)

Compared with standard Soviet military structure, the brigade contains large numbers of SPAA assets at both the brigade and battalion levels. Each motorized rifle battalion within the brigade has a subordinate battery of four ZSU-23/-4 SPAA guns. Additionally, a unit of eight ZSU-23/-4 SPAA guns, four SA-9 surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), and at least two SA-13 SAMs is found at the brigade level. SPAA assets have never been observed with the tank battalion of the Soviet brigade in Cuba. The number of SPAA (20 ZSU-23/-4s, four SA-9s, and two SA-13s) exceeds the usual complement for a Soviet motorized rifle division. The large amount of SPAA support can probably be attributed to Soviet perceptions of the potential threat to the brigade posed by US air assets. (S/WN)

The brigade structure in Cuba does not include a FROG/SS-21 surface-to-surface missile (SSM) battalion. SSM elements, in the form of one FROG 3/5 SSM battalion, were in the Soviet Ground Forces units assigned to Cuba in the early 1960s, but SSM elements

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have not been observed with the Soviet brigade since 1966. The FROG elements of the brigade were apparently turned over to the Cubans, who have since removed them from their operational inventory. (S/WN)

The structure of motorized rifle battalions within the brigade is also different from that usually observed in Soviet motorized rifle divisions. Motorized rifle battalions of the brigade consist of three motorized rifle companies, one SPAA battery (ZSU-23/-4), one antitank battery with nine ATGM-equipped armored cars

(BRDMs), and one 120-mm mortar battery (Chart 3). SPAA and antitank assets are not usually present in a Soviet motorized rifle battalion. (S/WN)

Until 1982, each motorized rifle battalion of the brigade also had one subordinate howitzer battery. These howitzer batteries were removed from the motorized rifle battalion structure and consolidated into a howitzer battalion directly subordinate to the brigade. The reorganization of the brigade's 122-mm howitzer D-30 assets reflects a revision in Soviet artillery doctrine rather than an attempt to improve the capabilities

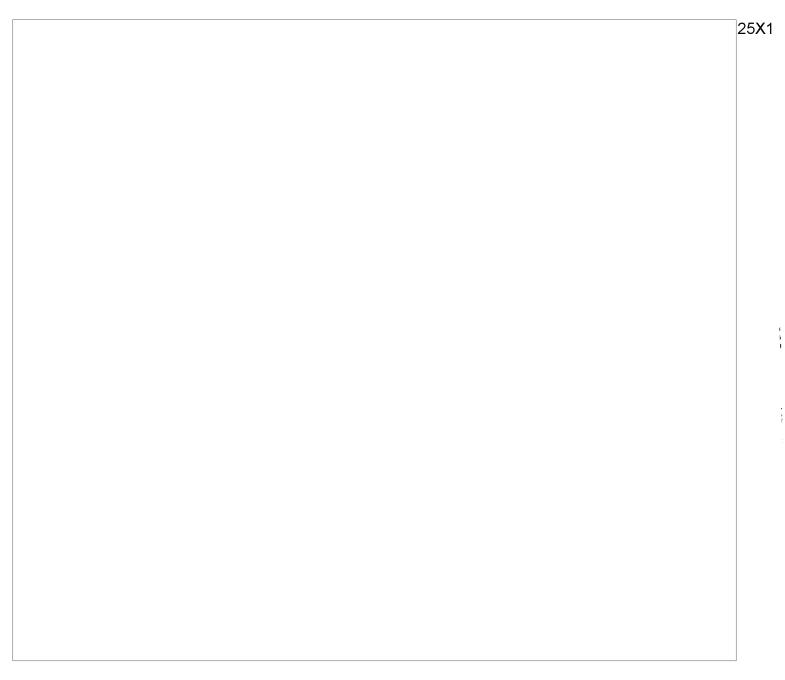
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of the brigade in Cuba. A shift in Soviet artillery doctrine designated the battalion, instead of the battery, as the basic fire mission unit of a brigade. This change in doctrine enables Soviet artillery to more effectively engage an enemy target while reducing their vulnerability to enemy counterbattery fire. (S/WN)

Some evidence obtained in 1985 suggested that a

possible upgrading of artillery equipment to the self-propelled 122-mm 2S1 may have been under way. Three possible 2S1s were observed in the garrison at Santiago de las Vegas 2. After this sighting, the brigade conducted field training with the towed 122-mm howitzer D-30, usually observed with the brigade, indicating no conversion had occurred. The single sighting of the 2S1 is unexplained. (S/WN)

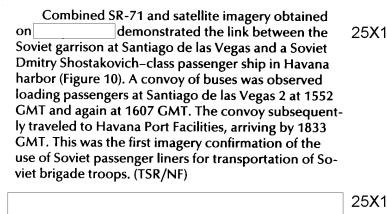


Training Cycle

The Soviet brigade in Cuba engages in a regular six-month training cycle (Chart 4) which begins with troop rotation and culminates in a field training exercise. Following troop rotation, the brigade begins garrison-based individual training that includes drill and ceremonies, basic military skills, and equipment familiarization. Troops are also involved in tank and APC range training at Alquizar, concurrent with the individual training phase of the cycle. The culmination of the training cycle is a field training exercise at San Pedro for most of the Soviet brigade elements. The SPAA elements train separately. There is very little interaction between Soviet and Cuban troops. (S/WN)

Troop Rotation

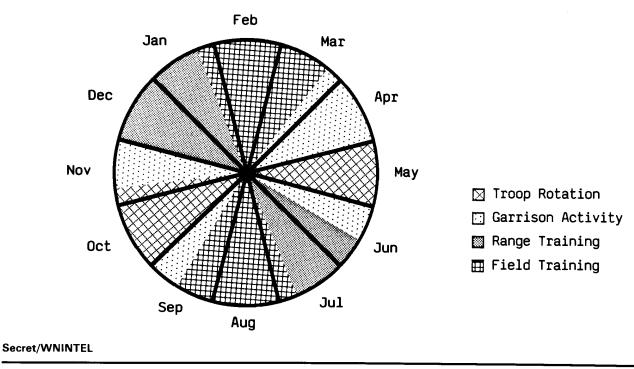
Soviet officers and senior noncommissioned officers with their dependents are probably transported to Cuba by air. However, the rotation of troops between the Soviet Union and Cuba is accomplished largely by sea. Soviet passenger ships transport these troops twice yearly from Kaliningrad or Odessa to Havana. (S/WN)



Soviet passenger ship

classes involved in troop rotations to Cuba and identified on imagery include Baltika, Dmitry Shostakovich, Maria Yermolova, Kalinin, and Leonid Sobinov. (S/WN/NF)

Chart 4. Training Cycle for the Soviet brigade in Cuba



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During each troop rotation a tent camp is erected at the Soviet garrison at Santiago de las Vegas 2 (Figure 11). The tent camp normally contains a troop housing area consisting of three large tents, each formed from four or five smaller tents joined together, and two additional tents which form a mess area. The tent camp had generally remained in place for 45 to 60 days prior to the 1984 and 1985 rotations (Table 2). Commencing with those rotations, the Soviets apparently began a practice of striking the tent camp between port calls of each of the troop ships. (S/WN)

and imagery confirms troop rotation as far back as 1976.

Garrison Training

Following troop rotation, initial training of new troops takes place at Santiago de las Vegas 2. This training is oriented toward individual soldier skills.

Some limited driver training, subcaliber firing, and main gun-bore sighting is probably conducted by tank and APC crews. (S/WN)

Table 2. Soviet Troop Rotations to Cuba

l Days Tent p Observed	
ing Fall 57 56 76 49–93 52†	25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1
ut was not ob-	25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1
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The motorized rifle battalion garrisoned at Lourdes probably has operational responsibility for the physical security of the Lourdes sigint facility, and as such does not train as extensively as troops garrisoned	25X
at Santiago de las Vegas 2. Historically, garrison activity at Lourdes has been limited,	25X 25X
	25X

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One ZSU-23/-4 SPAA battery was often deployed in a certain site within the Lourdes complex during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The site is no longer present and no ZSU-23/-4 has been observed defensively deployed at Lourdes since 1981. (S/WN) Additional activity has been observed at both garrisons just prior to deployment to the San Pedro military training area. Small tent camps are present at Santiago de las Vegas 2 and Lourdes approximately three to five weeks prior to deployment to San Pedro for field training (Figure 13). (S/WN)		25X
	Equipment usually observed at Alquizar includes as many as four BMP armored personnel carriers, three BTR-60PBs, and five T-62 tanks. The equipment is used by the brigade to phase in new conscripts and typically remains at Alquizar, departing only during Soviet field training exercises. (S/WN)	25X
		25X

ecret		25>	
Training oviet brigade SPAA assets train separately from	dus through the Mariel area during that period.	25) 25)	
ain body of the brigade. The ZSU-23/-4, SA-9, A-13s organic to the brigade have regularly d twice yearly at Mariel (Figure 14) and have	A tank firing range has been constructed for the Cuban naval infantry unit at Mariel, in the area formerly used by the Soviet SPAA units		
infrequently observed at San Antonio de los (Figure 15). Soviet SPAA units did train in the edro training area in 1980 and 1981; however, nange was probably related to the refugee exo-	as a live-fire training area.	25) 25)	
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Field Training

Each Soviet training cycle involves a field training exercise in the San Pedro training area (Figure 16). Imagery confirms Soviet brigade field training in San Pedro occurred as far back as 1975. (S/WN)

Soviet exercises in San Pedro generally follow a standard scenario. Fire-support elements arrive first in the training area, followed by company-sized maneuver units. Fire-support elements consisting of BM-21 MRLs, BRDM carriers, ATGM carriers, 122-mm howitzer D-30s, and 120-mm mortars conduct both dryand live-fire training in San Pedro. Fire-support elements usually arrive a week to 10 days prior to brigade maneuver elements. Brigade maneuver elements, in concert with fire-support elements, conduct both de-

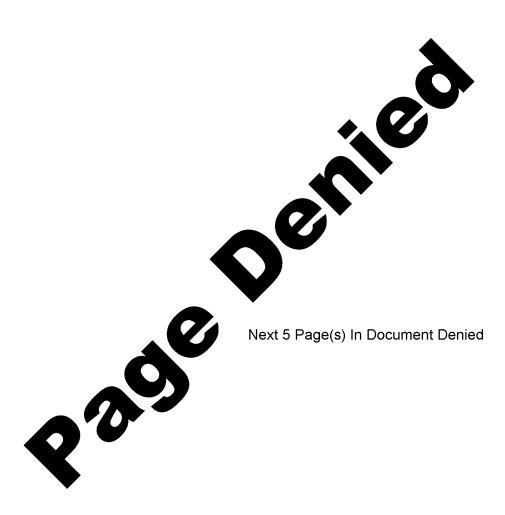
fensive and offensive maneuvers against various notional opposing forces. Brigade maneuver elements, typically in company strength, are usually the last to leave the training area. (S/WN)

Soviet/Cuban Involvement

Since the initial disclosure of the existence of the Soviet brigade in 1979, the Soviet Union has publicly maintained that the Soviet brigade consists of Soviet military experts helping Cubans master Soviet military hardware.⁷ While imagery shows an occasional association between Cuban forces and the Soviet brigade, it does not support the Soviet claim that the brigade functions as a training center for Cubans. No Cuban forces had been observed in the San Pedro training area during Soviet field training exercises prior to the

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Imagery Analyst's Comments

Prior to the new construction at Santiago de las Vegas 2 and construction of a vehicle park at Lourdes Central Sigint Complex in 1983, the brigade had approximately 480 covered vehicle storage spaces. If the recently constructed vehicle spaces at the two Soviet garrisons supplement rather than replace older storage buildings, the covered vehicle storage capacity would increase to approximately 780 spaces. However, most of the new vehicle storage space is probably intended to house vehicles displaced by the 37 new ammunition storage bunkers. Units likely to be displaced by the ammunition storage bunker construction include the tank battalion and both APC-equipped motorized rifle battalions. If the new vehicle storage buildings are indeed replacements, the new covered vehicle storage area will contain at least 214 spaces, 34 more than are currently available. (S/WN)

The Soviet brigade is likely to be supplied with new equipment. The brigade is not as well equipped as firstline Soviet units. The tanks are T-62s; APCs are BTR-60PBs and BMP-1s. Any upgrading would logically include the T-64 tank, the BTR-70 and BMP-2 APCs,

and tracked self-propelled artillery in the form of 122-mm 2S1 or the 152-mm 2S3. The Soviets would be cautious in considering the introduction of a tactical SSM system into Cuba because of US sensitivity to missiles there—a consideration that probably far outweighs any tactical advantage of such a system in Cuba. (S/WN)

The BMP, introduced in 1978, was the last confirmed non-air-defense weapon acquired by the brigade. The brigade received the SA-9 in 1980 and the SA-13, probably in 1984,

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Barring a Soviet political decision to introduce significant numbers of new personnel or offensive weapons systems into Cuba, the current modernization program within the Soviet brigade is not expected to increase significantly the threat to US interests posed by the brigade. Any actions that might result in a heightened US perception of threat would have to be considered by the Soviets as potentially provocative acts, given long-established US sensitivity to Soviet actions in Cuba. (S/WN)

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Documents

- 5. USM-6. 2/BB/294-85, 12th Training Center at Alquizar (SC), 031900Z Dec 85 (SECRET/S)
- 6. COMUSFORCARIB. Cuba/Caribbean Special Assessment (CCSA) 1-85 (U), Mar 85 (TOP SECRET R S)

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- 7. TASS, LD102131, PRAVDA Views Controversy over Soviet Troops in Cuba (U), 11 Sep 1979 (UNCLASSIFIED)
- 8. DIA. 2 760 0015 85, Construction Activities at Cuban and Soviet Installations in Cuba (U), 11 Feb 85 (SECRET/NOFORN)

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